



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

The Holy Blessed Martyr Philothei of Athens

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During the years of the Turkish occupation, there lived in Athens a blessed couple, Angelos Benizelos and his wife Syriga. They were wealthy in material and spiritual gifts. They especially practiced almsgiving, a virtue much-loved by Christ. However, they did not have any children, and every day they would ask God, if it was His will, to give them a child. Our loving God heard their prayers.

One day Syriga went to the church of the Mother of God as she often did. After she had fervently prayed to the Theotokos, she became tired and fell asleep. She saw a vision: a bright light came forth from the icon of the Theotokos and entered her womb. The blessed woman woke up and returned to her house, certain that her prayer had been heard. Indeed, after a little while she conceived and gave birth to a grace-filled little girl, whom she named Revoula.

Following the example of her

good parents and being obedient to their words, the child increased in virtue. When Revoula became of

become a nun. However, her parents persisted, giving her many reasons for getting married.

At last, she obeyed and got married. Her husband proved to be harsh and cruel, and would make her life sorrowful by speaking rudely to her and hitting her. However, Revoula prayed that God enlighten her husband. She tried with words of advice to help him, but this barbaric man did not wish to change his ways. Time passed this way, and blessed Revoula was patient, thanking God for all things.

Three years later, her husband died, and Revoula returned to her father's house, where she devoted herself to prayer and ascetic struggles, asking God to have mercy on her husband, and to make her a worthy nun. Her parents urged her to remarry; she did not follow their advice, however, for she had already made her decision. Revoula saw a vision, and became certain that her



Saint Philothei of Athens

marriageable age, one of the wealthiest rulers of the city asked her to be his wife. Revoula did not want to hear about marriage, as she desired to devote herself to Christ and to

purpose was in agreement with the will of God. After seven years, her parents reposed in the Lord, and she was free to make her desire a reality.

Revoula pondered where the

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most appropriate place would be to become a nun. While praying to God for enlightenment, Saint Andrew, the First-called disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, appeared before her and said:

“You are blessed, Revoula, and blessed is your yearning to become a nun. If you wish, build a convent in my memory so that you and all other pious women who also want to be monastics can have me as your friend and protector.”

After Saint Andrew said these words, he vanished. Revoula thanked God because, through Saint Andrew, Christ had revealed to her His holy will. She began to build the convent, and she gave money to the architects to build all the necessary structures. At the center of the various buildings, Revoula built a lovely chapel in memory of Saint Andrew. When the convent was finished, Revoula called her maidservants who had served her at her parents’ house, and told them:

“My dear friends, today I am leaving to go and serve my Christ Whom I love dearly. You are free to marry and have blessed families, or to follow me. To those of you who decide to marry, I will give a rich dowry from my parents’ estate. To the rest of you who will follow me, I promise that we will always have as our helper and protector Saint Andrew, along with God.”

When the maidservants heard her, they answered:

“Our dear lady, all these years you have taught us to love Christ more than anything. We, therefore, ask you to take us with you and be our guide in salvation, as you have been guiding us until now in virtue.”

The Saint rejoiced and took them along. She was tonsured a nun, receiving the name Philothei. Following her tonsure, her maidservants also were tonsured, and they all lived together at the Convent of Saint Andrew, struggling in asceticism and virtue.

Abbess Philothei’s life and that of her Synodia could not go unnoticed. Young women, many from notable and wealthy families, seeing her holy example, abandoned all temporary and corruptible pleasures and became nuns in obedience to her.

Saint Philother’s love, however, went beyond her Synodia, and embraced all people. She used the inheritance that her parents left her to build hospitals and shelters. Saint Philothei would go herself and take care of the patients, comforting them with words of the Gospel.

Because the poor came to Saint Philothei for help, the convent was in poverty, and the nuns protested:

“When we made the decision to become nuns, you promised us that Saint Andrew would always be our helper. Now we are starving, and we see no help. Please, stop giving away the little money we have left to the poor.”

Saint Philothei was very grieved by these words, and she instructed the nuns:

“My sisters, let us have faith in God, and be assured that He will not abandon us. Do you think that the One Who cares about the birds of the sky and the flowers of the field will leave us without help? Let our only care be how to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. God will provide everything else. Let us also not forget that he who gives alms to the poor lends to Christ Himself, and he will receive great blessings both in this life and the next.”

The Saint’s words became reality. A few days later, when two dignitaries came to the convent to pay their respects, they gave money for the needs of the sisterhood. The nuns glorified God and were awed by the unwavering faith of their abbess.

At that time, the Turks who had occupied Greece, brought to Athens some women whom they had enslaved in other parts of Greece. Four of these women, because their masters were pressuring them to deny their Christian faith, left secretly, and took refuge near the Saint. After instructing them to stand firm, Saint Philothei sought for the right time to help them return to their homes.

However, their masters learned of it. They broke into the Saint’s cell and led her to the ruler of the city who sent her to prison. The Saint rejoiced because she was suffering for Christ.

The next day, they again brought her before the Turkish ruler. He spoke to her gently, in order to make her change her mind:

“My reverend abbess, the only thing I am asking you is to reveal where you have hidden the women. If you obey, then we will let you go free to return to your convent without harming you. However, if you disobey, then a painful death awaits you.”

The Saint replied:

“I prefer a thousand times to suffer death rather than betray those women who came to me for refuge and protection.”

On hearing these words, the crowd of Turks began to shout:

“This woman is worthy of death!”

Then the Turkish ruler said to her again:

“Since you are hard-headed and do not wish to confess where you have hidden the women, you are left with one of two choices: you either deny your faith and become Moslem, or you die.”

The blessed Philothei replied to him with boldness:

“I will suffer any kind of torture for my Christ, in Whom I believe and Whom I worship with my whole soul. You would do me a great favor if you sent me to Him one hour earlier by martyrdom.”

After this response, the Turkish ruler wrote the decision of her condemnation. However, certain Christians, who had high positions and a certain friendship with him, hurried to convince him to free the Saint. Therefore, Saint Philothei returned to her convent, where the sisters received her with joy.

Since the number of sisters had increased, there was not enough room at Saint Andrew’s convent. So they asked Saint Philothei to build a second convent a little farther away, in an area called Patisia. Saint Philothei often went to this convent and instructed the nuns with her words, and especially by her way of life.

The Saint’s tribulations, however, had not ended, because the Turks held a grudge against her, and they were looking to take revenge. So, on the day of the feast of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, when Saint Philothei and the other sisters at the convent in Patisia were holding a vigil, some Turks forced their way into the church. After seizing Saint Philothei, they beat her so savagely that they left her half-dead.

The nuns were terror-stricken. When the Turks left, the sisters took Saint Philothei secretly and transported her to a safe place called Kalogreza. They took care of her wounds, but the pains from her injuries were so severe that she was unable to get out of bed. In spite of all this, the blessed Philothei thanked God for making her worthy to suffer for Him. From that time on, she was unable to recover fully.

Saint Philothei sensed that the end of her earthly life was approaching. She called together the nuns and told them:

“My sisters, I thank you for the love which you showed me for so many years. Not taking into account the toils and tribulations, I cared for your salvation day and night. Now that I am leaving this world, be as diligent as you can about your immortal souls, and don’t forget to beseech God in your prayers to forgive me a sinner. And if I find audience before God, then I will pray to the Lord for you, that He make us worthy to be together in His eternal Kingdom.”

With these words, Saint Philothei strengthened the nuns, so they would prove courageous in the face of her death. Those blessed ones kept her words deep in their hearts and guarded them as precious pearls.

After a few days, the blessed Philothei gave up her holy soul to our Lord, on February 19, 1589.

Our Christ honored her both in Heaven and on earth, because twenty days after her repose her grave began to emit a fragrance. Also, a year later, when the translation of her relics took place, her holy body was found to be incorrupt and fragrant. The Christians placed her body in a beautiful reliquary so that people could venerate it and receive cures from illnesses of every kind.

Later, when Greece was freed from the Turks, Saint Philothei’s body was transferred to the Cathedral in Athens, where it is found to this day. Multitudes of people visit Saint Philothei’s church to venerate her incorrupt body and to receive her blessing.

Dismissal Hymn

Plagal of First Tone. Let us worship the Word

THE famed city of Athens doth honour Philothei, * the righteous Martyr, whose relics it now revereth with joy; * for while living in sobriety and holiness, * she hath exchanged all earthly things * for the everlasting life through great contests as a Martyr; * and she entreateth the Saviour to grant His mercy unto all of us.

Kontakion

Third Tone. On this day the Virgin

WE all honour Philothei * with jubilation of spirit, * as this day we rev’reantly * worship her ven’rable relics. * For she lived her whole life working * kindness and mercy, * and the righteous one, receiving a martyr’s ending, * is deemed worthy to entreat God * that all be granted * eternal life with the Saints.

Megalynarion

ATHENS doth exalt thee, O Philothei, * since thou art her comfort * and protectress and saintly guide; * for her earth was hallowed * by thine ascetic struggles * and by thy holy contest in sacred martyrdom.

Icon and Hymns to Saint Philothei

© Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA

Axios!



Father George Kamberidis was ordained to the priesthood on November 30/December 13 at Saint Mark's Cathedral in Roslindale, Massachusetts. He is seen here with his presbytera, Parthena, his grandmother, Athanasia, and his sons Thomas and Panayiotis. Fr. George will be serving at the cathedral.



Father Vassily Mihailoff was ordained to the priesthood on December 7/20 at the Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Concord, New Hampshire. After two to three months of training at this parish, Father Vassily will be serving at Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco Orthodox Mission Parish in Kennebunk, Maine. He is seen here with Matushka Mary.

Ordinations in Rivne, Ukraine



This photo was taken on Sunday October 5/18 in the Rivne churchyard, after Liturgy and trapeza. The clergy, from left to right, are newly-ordained Reader Roman, Hieromonk Job, Metropolitan Makarios, newly-ordained Hierodeacon Martinian and newly-ordained Subdeacon Sergey. Behind Fr. Martinian are Deacon Yakov Tseitlin and Fr. Andrei Trachuk, a priest from Shepitovka, Ukraine who was visiting the parish. Fr. Andrei is interested in joining our Church. His adopted son Sergey is in front of Fr. Andrei. Fr. Job's mother Tamara is the second lady standing to the left of Fr. Job. Fr. Martinian's mother, Tatiana, is the sixth lady from the left. The fourth lady from the left (with glasses on) is Svetlana of Crimea. She is a niece of the late Fr. George of Crimea.

Thank You

Metropolitan Ephraim and Bishop Demetrius want to express their sincere thanks to all of you who have supported our efforts in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Russia, the Republic of Georgia and the parishes in the States. Your donations, which have been sent to the Benevolent Missionary Fund, Friends of Ugandan Orphans, Funds for Guatemala, as well as the diocese, have sent orphans to school, provided beds and other supplies for them, as well as funding books, church vessels—chalices and disks—for parishes throughout the world. Without your continued support, none of this would have been accomplished. This has been achieved without appeals being sent out, and you all have responded because of your love of Christ and His Church, the Orthodox Church. A full report will be included in the next issue of *The Faithful Steward*.

Report From Portland



Reader James Kalbasky, Father Photios, Metropolitan Moses, Protopresbyter Constantine Parr, Protodeacon George Psaromatis and Acolyte Philaret Psaromatis

On Sept 8/21, the Metropolis Cathedral of the Holy Nativity of the Theotokos celebrated its altar Feast. On that day, before the Small Entrance, our Proastamenos Fr. Constantine Parr was elevated to the rank of Protopresbyter, and the Cathedral's Deacon Fr. George Psaromatis was elevated to the rank of Protodeacon in keeping with the dignity of a Metropolis Cathedral. Axios. Philaret Psaromatis was made an acolyte.

Future Trips with St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor

St. Xenia Parish, Guatemala: January 30–February 7, 2010 (coed)

St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery, Kelseyville, CA: April 17–24, 2010 (male)

St. Peter and Paul Mission Parish, Tucson, AZ: Spring, 2010 (coed) seeking group leader

Holy Cross Monastery, Niagara Falls, NY; Spring, 2010 (male) seeking group leader

Convent of the Meeting of the Lord, Stanwood, WA: June, 2010 (coed) seeking group leader

Contact St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor by calling (814) 386-5254 or by emailing thespfl@gmail.com.

Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke

For what reason, O Lord? Wast Thou also terrified at death? Didst Thou being seized with fear draw back from suffering? And yet didst not Thou teach the holy apostles to make no account of the terrors of death, saying, *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul* (Matt. 10:28). Moreover, if any one were to say that the grace of spiritual fortitude is Thy gift to the elect, he would not err from the truth; for all strength is from Thee, and all confidence and heartiness of mind in every more excellent encounter. Thou art by nature Life, and the cause of life. Thee we look for as a Saviour and Deliverer, and the Destroyer of corruption. From Thee all receive their life and being. Thou hast made every thing that breathes. The angels are for Thee, and from Thee, and by Thee, and so is the whole rational creation. Unto Thee the blessed David spake concerning us, *Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth* (Psalm 103:30). How, therefore, art Thou grieved, and sore distressed, and sorrowful, even unto death? For plainly Thou knewest, in that Thou art God by nature, and knowest whatsoever is about to happen, that by enduring death in the flesh Thou wouldst free from death the inhabitants of all the earth, and bring Satan unto shame—that Thou wouldst set up a trophy of victory over every evil and opposing power: that Thou wouldst be known by every one, and worshipped as the God and Creator of all. Thou knewest that Thou wouldst despoil Hades—that Thou wouldst deliver those that are therein, from bonds that had endured for many ages; that Thou wouldst turn unto Thee all that is under heaven. These things Thou didst Thyself announce to us of old by the holy prophets. We have heard Thee clearly saying, when Thou wast like unto us, *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me* (John 12:31-2). *Amen, Amen, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit* (John 12:24).

For what reason, therefore, art Thou grieved and sore distressed? Yes, He says, not unbefittingly am I found thus in anguish. For I know indeed that by consenting to suffer the passion upon the cross, I shall deliver all beneath the heaven from every evil, and be the cause of unending blessings to the inhabitants of the whole earth. I am not unaware of the unloosing of death, and the abolition of corporeal corruption, and the overthrow of the tyranny of the devil, and the remission of sin. But withal it grieveth Me for Israel the firstborn, that henceforth He is not even among the servants. The portion of the Lord, and the cord of My inheritance, *they shall be a portion for foxes* (Ps. 62:10), as it is written.... He who had the promises is utterly stripped of My gifts: the pleasant vineyard with its rich grapes henceforth will be a desert land, a place dried up, and without water. *And I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it* (Esaia 5:6). *I will take away*

its hedge, and it shall be for a spoil; and I will pull down its walls, and it shall be left to be trodden down (Esaia 5:5). And tell Me then, what husbandman, when his vineyard is desert and waste, will feel no anguish for it? What shepherd would be so harsh and stern as, when his flock was perishing, to suffer nothing on its account? These are the causes of My grief; for these things I am sorrowful. For I am God, gentle, and that loveth to spare. *Shall I at all desire the death of the sinner, saith the Lord, as I desire that he should turn from his evil way, and live* (Ezek. 18:23)? Right is it, therefore, most right, that as being good and merciful, I should not only be glad at what is joyful, but also should feel sorrow at whatsoever is grievous.

But that He pitied Jerusalem, as being well aware of what was about to happen, and that it would have to endure all misery because of its crimes against Him, thou mayest learn even from this. For He went up from Judea to Jerusalem, and, as the Evangelist saith, *And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes* (Luke 19:41-42). For as He wept over Lazarus, in pity for the whole race of mankind, which had become the prey of corruption and of death; so we say that He was grieved at seeing Jerusalem all but involved in extreme miseries, and in calamities for which there was no cure.

And that we might learn what was His wish concerning Israel, He told the disciples, that He is in grief and anguish. For it would have been impossible for them to have learnt what was hidden within Him, if He had not revealed by words what His feelings were.

And this too I think it necessary to add to what has been said; that the passion of grief, or malady, as we may call it, of sore distress, cannot have reference to the divine and impassive nature of the Word; for that is impossible, inasmuch as It transcends all passion; but we say that the Incarnate Word willed also to submit Himself to the measure of human nature, by being supposed to suffer what belongs to it. Since, therefore, He is said to have hungered, although He is Life and the Cause of life, and the Living Bread; and was weary also from a long journey, although He is the Lord of powers; so also it is said that He was grieved, and seemed to be capable of anguish. For it would not have been fitting for Him Who submitted Himself to emptiness, and stood in the measure of human nature, to have seemed unwilling to endure human things. The Word of God the Father, therefore, is altogether free from all passion; but wisely and for the dispensation's sake He submitted Himself to the infirmities of mankind, in order that He might not seem to refuse that which the dispensation required; yea, He even yielded obedience to human customs and laws, only, as I said, He did not bear ought of this in His own nature.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 146*.

Concerning the Celebration of the Service of the Presanctified Gifts on Holy and Great Friday

A question has arisen regarding the correctness of celebrating the service of the Presanctified Gifts on Holy and Great Friday. The question is twofold: 1) How can we celebrate this service on Holy and Great Friday when all the contemporary *Typica* state that no Liturgy is celebrated on this day? and 2) “How,” say some, “can we celebrate the mystical sacrifice in church, on the holy altar, while the sacrificial Victim, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is still on the Cross?”¹

From a historical point of view, there is considerable variance in the rules that pertain to when the service of the Presanctified Gifts was celebrated.² We know from the canons of Saint Nicephorus the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople (806–815), that the service of the Presanctified Gifts was to be celebrated on all Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year (if these days did not coincide with a great feast which allows a relaxation of the fast), also on the Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare Week, all the fasting days of Lent—Monday through Friday, also during Holy Week, with the sole exception of Holy Thursday, and also on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

In this matter, the Russian Church followed the tradition of Constantinople. The service of the Presanctified Gifts was celebrated on Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare Week, and on all fasting days of Great Lent, including Holy and Great Friday.³

On the other hand, Saint Symeon of Thessalonica (1430), (who has been glorified in the Russian Church for many centuries and recently glorified by the Church of Constantinople), does not mention that the service of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on all Wednesdays and Fridays of the year, and he writes as follows:

Only during this fast [Great Lent] have we received the tradition of celebrating the service of the Presanctified Gifts on all five days of the week for the sake of greater spiritual struggle.

Then, concerning Holy and Great Friday, he says:

The service of the Presanctified Gifts was celebrated from the beginning likewise also on Holy and Great Friday; for the Fathers could not endure for even one day to pass without beholding the Lord through the holy Mysteries; for this cause He Himself said that He would be one with us. It is for our sake also that He said, “Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the end of time.” Our Saviour said this, not because He would not be with us *after* the end of time; for how could this be, since He Himself, when He prayed to His Father, said, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me ... that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24).

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given unto them, that they may be one, even as We are one” (John 17:22). And “I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:23). Rather, He speaks in this manner because He shall be with us until the end of time through the Mysteries. Furthermore, He said this not that any should think that since He is not bodily visible from the time of His ascension until His second coming, that He is not with us now, but rather that we should believe without hesitation that He is always with us and becomes one with us through His

holy Mysteries. Then, at the end of time, we shall see Him as He is, as the Beloved Disciple says. Paul also teaches us, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17).

However, I do not know how and in what manner it has come to be that, out of neglect, the service of the Presanctified Gifts is now not celebrated on the day of Great Friday. I think perhaps that since there is neither a complete fast, nor a complete liturgy, as is the custom, for this reason also the service of the Presanctified Gifts has also been neglected. This is true even with the Jerusalemite Typicon [i.e. the Typicon of the Monastery of



Saint Symeon of Thessalonica

Saint Sabbas] which is a monastic Typicon. That of the Great Church [the Ecumenical Patriarchate] differs, yet nonetheless, all the Churches follow [this tradition]. The continuous invasions of the nations [i.e. the Moslems and Crusaders] have destroyed its Typicon. Only in the catholic Church of the Thessalonians is this Typicon still maintained. We do not celebrate a complete Liturgy on Holy and Great Friday, because the Lord, Who on Holy Thursday surrendered unto us the Holy Mysteries in remembrance of His Passion, endured the Passion willingly on Holy Friday; and through the Cross He offered Himself willingly to the Father, as it is written, surrendering Himself (and not being surrendered by others) to those who wished to slay Him. Because of this, since at that time [Holy Friday] the sacrifice is already accomplished through the Passion in His divine Body, there is no need for us to celebrate those things that pertain to the remembrance of His Passion [as we would do in a complete Liturgy] at a time when He Himself was enduring it. Because of this, we have received the tradition of not celebrating a complete sacrifice, but only to offer the Presanctified Gifts and to serve this Liturgy, as is specified in many of the above-mentioned Typica.

Likewise, you shall find this very Typicon recorded in the ancient books of the Gospels and the Epistles.⁴

In regard to the second question, that is, how can we celebrate the mystical sacrifice in the church, on the altar, while the sacrificial Victim is still on the Cross, we ask: “Why single out only the Cross?” (We have seen that Saint Symeon of Thessalonica has already answered why we do not celebrate a *complete* Liturgy on Holy and Great Friday, but only the service of the Presanctified Gifts.)

If the reason we should not celebrate the service of the Presanctified Gifts on Holy Friday is because the Victim is on the Cross, then by the same reasoning, we should not celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the eve of the Nativity of our Saviour, for in the Glory of the Sixth Royal Hour we chant: “Today a Maiden great with child cometh to Bethlehem to give birth to the Lord.” Likewise, we would be unable to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Holy Theophany, for the Prayers at the Great Blessing of the Water clearly proclaim: “Today the Master hasteneth to Baptism, that He might raise

mankind up on high.” Furthermore, in the joyous canon of Matins for Holy and Great Saturday, we chant: “On perceiving Thee on Thy throne on high and in the grave below, those above the earth and those beneath the earth were shaken at Thy death” (Ode One).

Therefore, from what we are taught by the holy hymnology of the Church, it would appear that the God Who is adored and worshipped by Orthodox Christians is capable of being simultaneously both within the womb of the Virgin and on the holy altar on December 24th; both in the Jordan and in the holy chalice on January 6th; both in the grave below and on His throne on high on Holy and Great Friday and Saturday, and, as Saint Symeon of Thessalonica teaches us, always present with us in the holy Mysteries as well.

To deny this doctrine would, on the one hand, amount to denying that our God transcends time and space. And, on the other hand, it would be tantamount to saying that the hypostatic union of our Saviour’s divine and human natures is somehow deficient or faulty, and that, as a result, He is not perfectly omnipotent and omnipresent at all times, which would certainly be a novel teaching for the Church.

Endnotes

¹ This argument, as one may detect from its content and terminology, is that which the Roman Catholic scholastic theologians originally employed against the Orthodox Christians of the East in order to attack the Church’s ancient custom of celebrating the Service of the Presanctified Gifts on Holy and Great Friday. Saint Symeon of Thessalonica explains how the Latin practice (and view) came to be accepted in the Orthodox East. It is ironic that although, since 1955, the Latins have restored the ancient practice of communicating the faithful at the Service of the Presanctified Gifts on Holy and Great Friday, some Orthodox continue to repeat the old scholastic arguments against this ancient tradition.

² A good source of information on this subject is *Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church*, by Nicholas Uspensky (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), trans. by Paul Lazor.

³ N. Odintsov, *Poriadok obshchestvennogo i chastnogo bogoslužheniia v drevnei Rossii do XVI veka* [The Order of Public and Private Worship in Ancient Russia to the Sixteenth Century] (St. Petersburg, 1881), pp. 27, 41, 45, 53, 238.

⁴ P.G. 155, 352.

Secret Gardening—A How-To Guide

The Master said, “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12).

While this is a battle cry for Warriors of Christ, what are we simple folk to do? Thankfully, there are many avenues left for those of us who have a hard time finding our “violence.” Just as in any war, there are warriors, and there are those who work in supporting roles. During World War II, Americans kept small gardens, called Victory Gardens, in support of the war effort. If my tiny, little grandmother can keep a Victory Garden, any of us can.

Described here is a spiritual weapon that even the frail and timid, such as myself can wield. If you follow these instructions, in time you will have a secret spiritual garden instead of your mind being a wildflower meadow.

Where did this idea come from? The Desert Fathers sometimes referred to the “workshop of the mind.” The idea of a secret garden is only a tiny part of the workshop of the mind. We all have it in us. It’s not hard. We have the tools. From the font of Baptism each of us may choose to have our own secret garden.

Many feel that such a thing is only for great saints, but that is merely a smoke screen thrown up by the devil. A secret garden is within the reach of every Christian. It always has been. The tools that God provided us at Baptism are never taken away. Here is a skill that combines one tool from the mind and one from the soul. From the mind we make use of repetition. From the soul we use only a little patience, but not so much as to tempt us to give up.

As we’ve been taught when we were baptized, God assigned a Guardian Angel to each of us, and the devil assigned a demon. Our Angel wishes us to live with it in the Heavens forever, and the demon wants to keep that from happening. At first, the demon starts at an extreme disadvantage, but eventually our bad habits give it the means by which to craft our gradual falling away. For example, one Sunday we leave church a little early to be on time for an “appointment.” Before you know it we’ve developed the habit of leaving church earlier and earlier. There are many other examples of the slippery slope of bad habits that leave us vulnerable to the evil one, but you get the idea.

Now this is why Saint Philaret of New York told us to start good habits, no matter how small. Good habits

help us to even the score. A small good, done habitually, becomes a solid foundation for a monument of faith that reaches Heaven. But we must take the first step. This is where planting the seed of a good habit comes in, and the beginning of a secret spiritual garden.

Tithing a penny a week will make your heart feel glad, but your mind will be filled with silly excuses to stop tithing. (That worldly thought is a childish thing, so put it away.) Continue putting in your penny like clockwork. Eventually, when you know that, as sure as the sun comes up you could not help but give your next penny, only then should you move up to giving two pence a week. Of course, the penny is only symbolic. The habit is more important than the amount. Don’t think for a minute that giving one penny a week is the same as putting in fifty-two cents once a year. It’s not about the money. It’s the habit we’re after.

A small but good habit is like a stubby, little stake in the ground that is well-rooted and cannot be kicked out. For those of us whose minds are blown around by every breeze that comes along, creating a good habit is a worthwhile accomplishment and each of us can do it.

Being a gardener means we must learn about seedlings. Just as earthly gardens are composed of many kinds of plants, heavenly gardens are even more varied. Each of those plants started as a seed. So the first skill we must learn, is to plant and encourage the seed of a good habit.

To germinate and cultivate godly habits you need to work with your spiritual father and the Heavenly Host. You and your spiritual guide can review your life to find little spots where you have space to plant the seed of a good habit. Think of it as the research and planning stage of each new habit.

The whole purpose is to learn to cultivate godly habits, so that they can take the place of the bad habits that separate you from our Saviour.

A new habit is heavily influenced by how it starts. You can think of good habits as elusive and you must sneak up on them.

At this point some suggestions about seeds of good habits are in order.

- Small is good. If it’s embarrassingly small then we can’t pat ourselves on the back or brag to anyone. It’s not about the amount, or even the effort. It’s all about firmly establishing the habit. Mustard seeds are very small; so remember, small is good.

- Secret is good. We need each new habit to be as pride-proof as possible or else we've done the demon's work for him. While nothing is completely pride-proof, we must take steps to reduce the problem.
- Frequent is good. We want the repetition of the habit to build its own inertia.
- For now, don't start out trying to beat a bad habit directly in your first few tries at cultivating good habits. Conquering bad habits at first is a risky game. Later, when you are more skilled, you will naturally attack bad habits. Concentrate on learning the skill of starting good habits for now. You wouldn't go into battle with a weapon you hadn't finished making, so think of it as circling your opponent a few times before you go for the stranglehold.

Now, step back and consider the next idea. Failure isn't losing. Let me explain.

In this business of secret gardening failure is not losing. Thoughts of winning and losing are scorekeeping ideas that are not pertinent to spiritual gardening. The only way you can lose in spiritual gardening is to stop

trying. Look at it this way; if you retry a hundred times then you have cultivated the habit of not quitting. Remember also, our Master honors the intention. Don't listen to thoughts of failure—they are of this world, and not of the next.

Finally, the practice of Secret Gardening has Saint Euphrosynos as a patron saint. Even though this is serious work that only you can do, you are not alone. You will have the help of Saint Euphrosynos, your Guardian Angel, your spiritual father, and, of course, the entire Heavenly Host will be praying for you to have a good harvest. The same Heavenly Host that witnessed the great martyrs is also witnessing your work in your Secret Garden.

So get started. Pray for an idea of a good habit. Talk it over with your spiritual guide. Get on your knees and plant the seed of a habit. God is already with you. You already have the title of Secret Gardener.

In Christ Our God, I'm in the next Secret Garden over.
Amen.

Dositheos

**St. Xenia Camp 2010
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after June 30

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Archives Project

Mrs. Elizabeth Cousins, an Archives Consultant, is helping the diocese to identify and manage our records. An upcoming phase of the project will be a survey of parish records to identify types of records held, retention and filing practices, storage, security, and record keeping concerns. This will assist parishes to analyze their records and determine not only what has to be retained, but also how to properly store documents that are permanently kept in the parish. Father John Fleaser will contact parishes in the near future. Look for more about the Archives Project in the next issue.

Clothes Make A Difference

By Mother Macaria

In 2008, en route to serve the October 13/26 parish feast of The Most Holy Mother of God, Keeper of the Portal (Iveron), in Calgary, Alberta, Father David Belden and I went to the ticket counter at Toronto's Pearson International Airport some two hours before our flight. A young Moslem woman, fully garbed—only her eyes showing from above her face veil—came to me and asked nervously.

"May I ask you a question? Can you help me, please?"

"Ask me anything," I said. "And if it is at all within my power to do so, certainly I will help you."

She stared at me briefly with her fatigued eyes, then said in a rush, "I need a woman to help me with my children's oxygen masks, if they would be needed. You are on the same flight, are you not?"

She had four children under the age of five to manage, had flown 36 hours from Amman, Jordan, through Europe, and was now at her last connection from Toronto to Edmonton, Alberta. The airline was refusing her entry to our flight.

Mariamme, as she was called, had been born in Edmonton to Egyptian parents, and spoke with no foreign accent. She got her psychology degree at the University of Calgary, where she met and married her Palestinian husband. They moved to his native Jordan, where he worked in Amman as an international sales representative.

Two days before, Mariamme had packed up her Jordanian household, in order to move her family back to Edmonton. The plan had been to rendezvous with her husband in Frankfurt where he was working, and to proceed to Canada. However, the papers he had used to come eight years previously were no longer adequate, and he had to return to Amman for new documents. Mariamme thus had to proceed onward herself, with the children.

She asked if we were Orthodox Christians, recognizing our appearance from the still existent presence of Orthodox Christians in Palestine.

"I dreamed a few months ago that a Christian priest would save me in my hour of need, a priest with a white beard and a long black robe," she confided to me.

When I introduced her to Father David and explained her dilemma, he immediately agreed to help.

"Certainly I'll take a child to care for on the plane. I've raised three of my own, and would be glad to do it. We'll do whatever it takes," he said to her reassuringly.

It wasn't so simple, however. The personnel from Sunwing Airlines raised a myriad of objections based on different scenarios and speculative "what ifs?"

"What if, in an emergency, a child died? You'd sue, or they would sue you."

The three of us offered to sign waivers to any effect they wished. Determined to prevent her entry, the counter personnel ticked off a whole list of objections. ... If oxygen masks dropped, she'd have to unbuckle her seatbelt in order to reach all her children.

"That's why we would help—to avoid that potential safety hazard," we said.

Mariamme's uncle had purchased all their tickets online from Amman. Hoping to make their flight easier, he had booked an adult seat for each child. This was now construed as a "deception." Only a "child" could occupy an adult seat, not an "infant." Their passports clearly showed that her twin daughters were only 23½ months old, still "infants," while a "child" must be 24 months old. Her girls were clearly two weeks short of that legality. Hence, due to her "obvious deception," she was to forfeit the flight, and no refunds would be given due to the nature of her "deception."

Father David and I had been brought to Pearson Airport by Paisios and Sophia Evans along with their two youngest children. The Evans had stood by us all this time, instinctively minding all the little ones together. Their 3-year-old Andrew was by now playing ball with 4½-year-old Abdullah in the spacious terminal, and their 22-month-old Elwin was happy with the twin girls, Fatima and Hadjita (meaning "pilgrimage"), so close to her in age and size. The 6-month-old Abraham was cooing in the back of the triplet stroller. An hour passed.

We stood awaiting verdicts from people consulting code books, and phoning back and forth to airline managers, who objected that Father David and I were not blood relatives to Mariamme's children, and thus not able to be appointed by her as proper escorts. Poor Mariamme, nearly reeling from stress and travel fatigue, explained to them yet again that her only surviving relative in Canada, her father, was too ill to fly to Toronto in order to accompany her back to Edmonton. While she was a Canadian citizen, her father was not, and as a foreigner, he would have to pay cash for his upcoming surgery. Indeed, they were moving to Edmonton so she could take care of him. If he had to spend all his money on their five new tickets and a round trip for himself, he would have to forfeit his own surgery. He could die! They would not even allow her to contact anyone in the Toronto Moslem community for assistance, and none of us had a cell phone to help further.

Refused passage, denied a refund, and further denied any humanitarian calls, she was simply told she could hail a taxi at the entrance. She came over to thank us for having offered help.

“No,” she didn’t need money. She had some money and a credit card, and would manage somehow. We offered our best advice, gave what consolations we could, and turned to leave.

“Father David, Mother Macaria, will you please return to the ticket desk,” a manager shouted out. We did. They suddenly decided to accept our proffered assistance with Mariamme’s children.

“My hour of need,” she whispered wonderingly to no one in particular.

Since she was delayed at security a very long time, we missed the early boarding “for those with children, and those needing special assistance.” Father and I were told we would have to board last, each with our own separate charge. The two of us waited an hour by the gate. With only three minutes until gate closing, security brought Mariamme and her children on a transport cart.

Our seats had been arranged in a single line across the back of the plane, with three seats on either side of the aisle, so that Mariamme could see us all at a glance.

We received special child-safety instructions: during takeoff and landing the babies had to be held in upright-burping position. This position also had to be assumed whenever the seatbelt sign was turned on during turbulence, which happened several times during the four-hour flight.

Each time, they announced over the loudspeaker (lest we forget!), “Trays and babies secured into upright positions, please.”

A vicious kink in my neck, and two aching shoulders later, I said a sincere prayer for parents everywhere.

I relate all these details of our physical sojourn, so one may more fully appreciate the effect all of this had on the ensuing events.

Finally secure on her journey’s last lap, Mariamme started telling me her story in a more thoughtful and detailed manner, as it seemed important to her.

“Abraham was also a twin, but I lost the other one in my fourth month. Then I had a dream of a Christian priest saving me in my hour of need. I looked, waiting for one, wondering if he were even a doctor in the hospital I was in. The doctor I had was very cruel, and I do not think he even liked women. He wanted to take Abraham by cesarian, but I feared for my life to be at his mercy. I prayed very hard for the priest to save me, but no one came. This was, after all, a hospital in Amman, Jordan, a Moslem country. I had Abraham naturally, two weeks before the scheduled cesarian, and I was saved. I wondered if that was my ‘hour of need.’ What I saw in the dream was very clear: a priest with a white beard, a cross, and a long black robe. I saw no particular face, however, so I waited and wondered.

“I don’t think I dreamed of you, Mother Macaria, because it would only have confused me. When I first saw you, I thought, of course, you were a Moslem woman that

I knew. When I saw you were an Orthodox Christian nun, then I knew that your priest must be the one who would fit the dream—an Orthodox Christian priest who would help me.”

The holy Fathers are replete with injunctions to cautious sobriety when speaking on matters of faith, especially to those who are outside of the Orthodox Church. Thus, in fielding Mariamme’s queries, I had tried to be very circumspect, lest I misspeak.

While we were in the terminal, she had often proclaimed, “It is written. It is written.” Here again she affirmed, “It is written.”

Noticing my lack of assent, she asked, “Do you not believe ‘it is written’ that you would help me?”

“We Orthodox Christians believe in free will, while Moslems believe in *kismet*—in fate,” I explained. “While God foreknows our choices, we are still free to choose to act one way or another. We are not puppets or robots, locked in without choices, or forced by necessity.” (Mariamme had already informed me that the Koran recognized the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Jesus, so I continued on with the Theotokos as an example.)

“When the Archangel Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary, she questioned the Angel. She had a choice, free will. She did not conceive by the Holy Spirit until she consented. God did not force her. She could have said ‘No,’ and God could then have found another woman to bear His Son. She was prepared, however, and understood. Being obedient to God’s will, she agreed and consented. She said ‘Yes.’ It is a mystery how God can both foreknow and foreordain, yet still pull back and let us have our choice in free will. Our little minds couldn’t do it. Only God is big enough to do so. It is a mystery, but that’s how it is.”

“Free will—yes! Always free will,” she agreed. “If Moslems believe in *kismet*, in fate, then I do not believe as the Moslems do, but in free will always!”

We passed the children back and forth, so Mariamme could tend to their needs or take a break herself.

“Mother Macaria,” she said as though she had suddenly reached a conclusion, “You never once hesitated to help me. I watched your eyes. You never even blinked, or hesitated for even a split second when I asked for help, and you said yes even before you knew what I would ask. Your sureness gave me confidence. I was near despair. Two other families I had asked also said they would help, but when the children started crying they said, ‘You’re on your own, lady.’ They left me, and I could not get on the plane.

“Father David also never once hesitated. You two have not even tried to proselytize me! You only explained a few things and answered my questions, but you haven’t tried to convert me. Everyone else tries to preach and proselytize, to gain a soul for their own glory; both other Christians, and especially Moslems. But you and Father David have only

helped me as I am, without trying to gain anything for yourselves. You have only done what the Christ would have you do. That shouts louder than any preaching.”

“Any number of our people would have done the same for you, not just Father David and me. Most any of us would not have hesitated at all to help you. That’s just who we are as Orthodox Christians.”

She fell silent, obviously struggling with her thoughts. Some time later, Mariamme asked, “Other than the Quakers, what other Christian women wear long clothes as Moslem women do?”

“There are the Quakers, the Hutterites—especially here in Western Canada—some Mennonites, and the Amish.”

“No,” she said shyly, “I mean, what do *your* women look like?”

Chagrined at my obtuseness, I smiled, glad I could confidently describe the modesty of *our* women. Fondly recalling many to mind, I said, “Our women do not wear uniform attire as the Hutterites or Amish, nor do they dress as we nuns do, although some widows may. Actually, the Moslem women copied this (pointing to my habit) from the Christians. Saint Pachomius was shown by an Angel in the second century, how we monastics should dress. It was the early Christian women who instituted modest clothing, and scarves as head coverings. Pagans in those days were hardly covered decently at all. It was the Christians who brought modesty to their attire. We dressed like this some four to six hundred years before Mohammed was even born.

“Our women wear modest dresses—up to the neck, long sleeves—at least to cover the elbows, even in the heat of summer, and longer skirts than most other women do—not necessarily floor length, though some do, but very modest, and very conservative. Our women wear head scarves, especially in Church.”

“Like this?” (She touched her long, grey head scarf.)

“Yes—some,” I nodded, “especially those who understand spiritually to cover their hair. Not all have that understanding, but many do.”

“Yes, like that kind woman who came with you to the airport?” (Sophia Evans had worn a modest skirt, long-sleeved blouse, and a head scarf in deference to Father and me, even in the airport.)

At this point Mariamme exclaimed, “Then there *are* true Christians left! You must be the *true* Orthodox Christians!” she said in wonderment.

She had said it so quietly, and with such reverence, that I only nodded, praying silently to our Saviour, Who was enlightening this Moslem woman step by step.

On several occasions throughout the day, Mariamme had said, “God is One. We all believe in the same God. The same—One God, the same God is One.”

Neither Father David nor I ever gave assent, not by a word nor by a nod, whenever she said such things, but we

held our peace. Now on the plane, Mariamme again tried to seek affirmation for her beliefs.

“God is One,” she cried. “We Moslems and you Christians are all children of the same God, are we not? God is One—the One God!”

“Actually,” I explained, “both Jews and Moslems agree on one point. When they speak of God as being ‘One,’ they mean a single being—at best, as God the Father. They speak of God as a single unit. They are Unitarians. But when we Orthodox Christians refer to God, we mean God in the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; the Holy Trinity, one in essence, and undivided. It is a Mystery many others cannot understand, but still, it is so. Therefore, we do not use the term, ‘God is One,’ or say, ‘We all believe in the same God,’ because we do not. Our God, the God of the Christians, is God in Trinity.”

“But the Koran acknowledges that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God,” she pondered. “Therefore, God cannot be ‘One’—only the Father, because He also already has the Son. It even says so in the Koran.¹ So the Holy Trinity must be God. The Holy Spirit—the *grace* of God—yes? If even in the Koran there is already God the Father, and Jesus is the Son of God, then I must believe in God the Holy Trinity. It must be so!”

As I pondered on the power of our Saviour’s enlightenment helping this young Moslem woman’s insight, I prayed that our Lord strengthen and guide her, and I asked His forgiveness for my own lassitude.

A stewardess came and knelt in the aisle between us. “I know I will be in trouble when we land, and I may even lose my job here on the airline. So I’m asking you, Mariamme, if you would sign this letter for me. When you got on the plane and we were ready for takeoff, remember there was still that long delay? That was because my immediate boss came and demanded me to remove you and your children from the plane. I am the stewardess in charge of in-flight safety, and my boss argued that we were breaking safety rules. The captain sided with me, that the priest and the nun here would be adequate assistants for safety. ‘I’m not putting that mother and her children off my ship,’ he said. ‘They’re *my* passengers, and I’m taking off. Shut the door!’ So I had to shut the door in my own boss’s face, even while she was still shouting at me not to do it. But the captain and I agree: There are rules, and then there is real life; and we have to get you home.”

Thus the hater of good, the evil one, tried even until the last moment to prevent Mariamme’s passage on this flight.

The captain announced that we were beginning our descent, and would land in Edmonton in about half an hour. With her four children now asleep, Mariamme was

¹ These are Mariamme’s thoughts. The Koran, in fact, denies this teaching of the Gospel.

free to comb through her thoughts. In a quiet voice, she recounted all the evidence of her beliefs before her:

"I dreamed of a Christian priest who would 'save me in my hour of need.' You and Father David truly came to help me in my 'hour of need.' You know," (she turned to me) "Mohammed knew well of the generosity of the Christians. He wrote that if you are ever in trouble or need a place to stay, then go to the Christians, because true Christians, who believe and truly follow the Christ, will never turn anyone away. They will give you whatever help or shelter you need. He wrote that in the Koran.

"I believe in free will, not in *kismet* or fate. If the Moslems do, I do not, but always in free will, always!

"I believe in God the Father, and in His Son, Jesus the Christ, and in the grace of God. I must believe in the Holy Trinity.

"I believe the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. I wonder if the grace of God stopped with Jesus the Christ, and *not* Mohammed. Perhaps the Christians are right, after all. I will think and ponder this for the rest of my life. I am a Moslem woman, the wife of a Moslem man, and the daughter of a Moslem man. I have Moslem children to raise, but I will think on these things for the rest of my life. I will never forget, but must think on these things for the rest of my life."

The chief safety stewardess returned to inform us that the captain had radioed ahead, to have the cargo crew retrieve Mariamme's triplet stroller first, before the luggage. It was to be ready at the gate when she disembarked. The captain had also arranged for a lady security guard, authorized to handle children, to help Mariamme off the plane.

Father David and I worked as a team, dressing our sleeping charges in their winter jackets and bonnets, without waking them up.

Upon landing, the security woman helped Mariamme with her twins, her infant, and their many bags. In parting, Mariamme thanked Father David and me.

"I pray that some day, God be willing, I will once again meet you at some time in my life in Edmonton," she said.

As soon as the armrests between seats had been flipped up, and seatbelts unhitched, Abdullah threw himself across the three seats, lying flat for the first time in his over forty hour journey. His mother tried to rouse him, but he flailed at her in his desperation to lie flat and sleep, so she left him alone while juggling the other three and their bags off the plane. Some ten minutes passed before we understood that security would not allow Mariamme back on the plane to retrieve her son. Abdullah by now lay in the deepest sleep, and could not be roused by any coaxing words, light taps, or tickles to his chin. Five stewardesses congregated around the sleeping child.

"Come on, sweetie; get up, honey," they said. One said to me, "We're not authorized to pick him up."

"Well, I am still authorized," I said, and instantly they all turned to help me up and out of my seat.

I tugged under the boy's arms. Fifty or sixty pounds? Dead weight. Nearly five, he seemed large for his age. I got him off the seats, pulling him upright, whereupon he collapsed into a heap in the aisle. He was out cold. What to do?

I am legally disabled due to certain health problems and weakness. After years of needing a wheelchair, I still use a walker at home, and for trips I rely on a cane. Nearing sixty, I am no longer young, either.

"Lord, give me strength," I prayed, and in His merciful kindness towards all men, our Lord enabled me to proceed in spite of my weakness. Somehow I was able to lift the boy over my shoulder, carry him the length of the plane, and set him down by the door, where he again melted into a puddle of oblivion on the floor. When for a third time I hauled him to his feet, and the cold October air hit him, he gasped himself awake enough, so that a stewardess could steer him by the shoulders to the gate, where his mother was waiting. Waves of chuckles from some 200 passengers rippled past me as I returned to my seat.

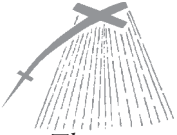
"For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," writes Saint Paul. And as our Abbess Stephanian of blessed memory used to say, "Nothing good comes without a struggle in this life."

How very difficult and constantly tiring parenting must be, I wondered, as we continued our flight to Calgary.

"I wish Mariamme would have dreamt of me with a nice black beard and a long white robe," said Father David in jest. "Being young again would be nice. But seriously, it is not always convenient for Orthodox clergy to wear long robes, or to have untrimmed hair and beards, rather than trimming them according to the vanity of this world's expectations. But God knows it serves a purpose. People do not turn to plain clothes priests, trimmed, shorn, and shaven. They recognize us as Orthodox clergymen at all times, everywhere we go, everywhere in the world. Because we are recognizable, anyone can turn to us. And people very often do so, even with no prior introduction. It is part of our job to be recognizable as Orthodox clergymen. It, in itself, is a visible confession of being followers of our Saviour."

I would extend Father David's observations to all members of our holy Orthodox Church, both in North America and throughout the world. Each one who consciously dresses modestly calls to mind that our Saviour regards us not only in church, but even out and about in our daily lives. Modest dress and modest behaviour mark us before men and angels as right-believing Orthodox Christians, even when we are not aware that we are being observed.

We pray for Mariamme's continued enlightenment toward our Saviour, Jesus the Christ, as well as for our own. Amen.



About Our Logo
A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

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“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward* is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

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